

## RELATIONSHIP TO PLANS AND POLICIES

This section summarizes the plans and policies that provide guidance for regulations within the study area. See Appendix H for additional detailed information about specific goals and policies.

### GMA and Washington State's Regulatory Framework

#### GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (RCW 36.70A)

##### Summary

The Growth Management Act, first enacted as ESHB 2929 by the 1990 State legislature, contains a comprehensive framework for managing growth and coordinating land use planning with infrastructure. Many provisions of the Act apply to the state's largest and fastest growing jurisdictions, including King County and all its cities. The Act is long and quite complex; the following is a brief, selective summary of relevant provisions:

Among other requirements, jurisdictions subject to the Act must prepare and adopt:

- County-wide planning policies for implementation of the Act;
- Comprehensive land use plans containing specified elements and embodying state-wide goals;
- Regulations consistent with those plans;
- Capital facilities plans (including financing elements) for utilities and transportation systems; and
- Programs designating and regulating critical/sensitive areas (including agricultural and forest lands, wetlands, steep slopes and critical habitat).

The general planning goals of the Act include: directing growth to urban areas; reducing sprawl; providing efficient transportation systems; promoting a range of residential densities and housing types, and encouraging affordable housing; promoting economic development throughout the state; protecting private property rights; ensuring timely and fair processing of applications; maintaining and enhancing resource-based industries; encouraging retention of open space and habitat areas; protecting the environment; involving citizens in the planning process; ensuring that public facilities necessary to support development are adequate prior to occupancy; and preserving lands with historical and archaeological significance.

Comprehensive plans must contain elements dealing with land use, housing, capital facilities, public utilities, rural lands where appropriate, and transportation. Optional elements include conservation, solar energy and recreation as well as other areas dealing with the physical environment. Sub-area plans (i.e., neighborhood and community plans) are also authorized.

The Act authorizes the imposition of impact fees for specified public services and facilities—roads, schools and parks. Such fees must be based on adopted capital facilities plans and facility standards. Among other things, the plan must identify the projected facility needs and sources of funding. The Act also contains general standards for calculating, imposing and expending fees. The Act provides for creation of three Growth Planning Hearings Boards for the State of Washington that hear and determine petitions alleging noncompliance of local plans and regulations with the Act.

Counties must also designate "urban growth areas" within which urban growth is encouraged and services and facilities are, or are planned to be, available. All cities must be within an urban growth area. Cooperative intergovernmental negotiation is contemplated as the means to determine urban growth boundaries; a dispute resolution process is also set forth.

Within designated urban growth areas, residential densities are to be sufficient to accommodate 20-year population forecasts. The growth areas should also include greenbelts and open space. Other lands that must be identified in comprehensive plans include: land for public purposes, such as utility and transportation corridors, sewage treatment facilities, landfills, schools and recreation, and open space corridors within and between urban growth areas.

The framework established by the Act relies on adoption of regional and/or local plans and regulations that can be measured against the Act's goals and objectives. The Act itself does not establish a permitting system or regulations for individual development proposals.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

All of the alternatives are consistent with the primary directive of GMA, which is to discourage sprawl by directing growth to urban areas.

## **PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL ADOPTED MULTICOUNTY FRAMEWORK GOALS AND POLICIES**

### **Summary**

The Multicounty Framework Goals and Policies provide guidance for regional growth consistent with the mandates of the State's Growth Management Act. Generally, these policies seek to locate development in urban growth areas to conserve natural resources, foster sustainability, promote economic opportunity, and enable efficient provision of services and facilities. The policies encourage concentrated growth in compact, well-defined mixed-use urban centers to use land resources efficiently, enable residents to live close to work and services, promote bicycling, walking and transit use, and strengthen community. Coordination among jurisdictions in providing necessary public facilities and services is encouraged to promote efficiency and cost effectiveness. Interjurisdictional planning is emphasized to coordinate plans and implementation activities to achieve consistency.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

All of the alternatives are consistent with the directive of the Multicounty Framework Goals and Policies to promote concentrated growth in compact, well-defined mixed-use urban centers. By allowing for the greatest density of development, Alternative 1 could accommodate the greatest concentration of development. However, under all of the alternatives, as residential capacity becomes increasingly limited over the longer term, accommodating the mix of uses will become more difficult.

## **KING COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES**

### **Summary**

The Metropolitan King County Council adopted the Countywide Planning Policies (CPP), drafted by the King County Growth Management Planning Council, in August 1994. The policies are intended to provide a regional policy framework for local jurisdictions to follow in their planning to implement the Growth Management Act. The CPP also contain development guidelines, standards and recommended processes to be implemented by individual cities and King County. Subject areas addressed in the CPP include critical areas, land use pattern, transportation, community character and open space, affordable housing, contiguous and orderly development, siting regional/statewide capital facilities and economic development.

Policies generally encourage concentrating urban development in a defined Urban Growth Area and phasing the provision of adequate services. The CPP also recognize 12 designated Urban Centers (including Downtown Seattle) as the focus for a significant portion of regional growth over the 20-year planning period. The CPP call for 25% of all new housing units and 50% of all new jobs targeted for the County to be accommodated in Urban Centers. Additional employment growth is also directed to areas designated as Manufacturing/Industrial Centers, with policies promoting the continued concentration of manufacturing and other types of industrial uses in these areas. The policies envision Urban Centers as areas of concentrated employment and housing, with direct access to high capacity transit, and supporting a wide range of other land uses, such as retail, recreation, public facilities and parks and open space. Criteria are also established regarding employment and household densities and size requirements that areas must meet for designation as an Urban Center.

The CPP also provide that local plans should designate Activity Areas within the Urban Growth Area, outside designated Urban Centers. Uses and densities should provide local employment, commercial activities and public facilities, and should encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel. Business and office parks are directed primarily to Urban Centers; office development outside Urban Centers should occur in pedestrian-oriented Activity Areas.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

All of the alternatives are consistent with Downtown's designation as one of the 12 Urban Centers established by the CPP, and all would accommodate the concentration of employment, housing and other uses envisioned for Urban Centers under these policies. Altogether, 25% of the County's total residential growth and 50% of the job growth is targeted to Urban Centers. To date, Urban Centers have accommodated about 18% of the total residential growth in the County, and 29% of the job growth. While falling short of the goals, the proportion of growth occurring in centers has been growing almost every year. From 1995 to 1999, the Downtown Seattle Urban Center added 24,090 jobs, or 47% of the total jobs accommodated in all Urban Centers over the same time period. The 5,400 housing units added Downtown between 1995 and 2000 represent 42% of all housing units added in Urban Centers. While Downtown has been successful in accommodating a significant share of total Urban Center growth, the success of the regional strategy also requires that more growth be attracted to under-performing Centers, including locations like Northgate, SeaTac and Kent.

## **CITY OF SEATTLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: LAND USE ELEMENT**

### **Summary**

Adopted in July 1994, Seattle's Comprehensive Plan includes policies in the Land Use Element that call for concentrating future employment and population growth in Urban Centers, as defined by countywide planning policies, and in existing activity centers. The policies promote the Urban Village concept, targeting employment and housing growth to various centers and villages in a balanced manner, to respond to transportation accessibility, neighborhood character and identity, pedestrian friendliness and human scale, and capacities of public facilities and amenities. The policies also emphasize the need to promote a comprehensive citywide open space system by protecting existing open space resources and incorporating new public open space as an important element for supporting growth in Urban Villages.

Several of the land use policies provide further guidance regarding appropriate locations within the city for different types and amounts of growth. These policies promote stronger links between the location of job growth and transportation capacity, discourage population growth in areas not easily served by existing transportation facilities, and encourage population growth within walking distance of Downtown employment and high capacity transit centers.

Specific to Downtown, policies in the Land Use Element establish Downtown Seattle as one of the region's Urban Centers, meeting the criteria of the Countywide Planning Policies for size, achievable employment and housing densities and connection to high-capacity transit. The Plan targets the area for substantial growth over the 20-year planning timeframe, including the addition of 62,700 more jobs and 14,700 new households by the year 2014.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

**Alternative 1.** In addition to accommodating the Comprehensive Plan targets for Downtown housing and employment growth between the years 1994 and 2014, the height and density increases proposed in this alternative provide additional development capacity to accommodate further growth for perhaps another 20 years or more beyond the Comprehensive Plan's initial 20-year timeframe (1994-2014).

Continued growth Downtown is consistent with Downtown's designation as a regional Urban Center. However, the Comprehensive Plan does not specify the amount of growth or balance between residential and employment growth sought for Downtown beyond 2014. In all the alternatives, the employment and residential growth projected over 20 years from 2000 to 2020 represents an addition of one new housing unit Downtown for about every four additional jobs; essentially the same ratio as that established by the Comprehensive Plan's employment and housing growth targets. Growth over the longer term presents issues in terms of the balance maintained between accommodating new jobs and housing Downtown. Beyond 2020, Alternative 1 has the most capacity remaining for continued employment growth.

**Alternative 2.** Alternative 2 will provide sufficient capacity to accommodate projected employment and residential growth. Similar to Alternative 1, it is estimated that job growth can be accommodated for another 18 years beyond the 20-year planning period (2000 to 2020), with residential capacity tapering off after about 25 years.

**Alternative 3.** Alternative 3 provides sufficient capacity to accommodate projected employment and residential growth, with additional capacity estimated for another 14 years or more of job growth and 5 years of residential growth beyond the 20-year planning period.

**Alternative 4.** Alternative 4 will provide sufficient capacity to accommodate projected employment and residential growth. Additional commercial capacity could accommodate another 13 or more years of job growth and 2 or more years of residential growth beyond the 20-year planning period.

## **DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER GOALS AND POLICIES**

### **Summary**

The City's goals and policies for the Downtown Urban Center are included in the Neighborhood Planning Element of the Comprehensive Plan. These goals and policies define the direction for Downtown growth, investment, and development. The policies focus on the following major areas: 1) land use, urban design, and open space, 2) economic development, 3) housing, and 4) transportation.

Overall, the policies identify the desired character and function of the different areas within Downtown, and establish the various zones intended to achieve these desired conditions. The policies support strong coordination of land use and transportation, promoting high levels of transit use to accommodate the densities of development allowed, and placing special emphasis on the quality of the pedestrian environment. The policies establish an urban design framework that seeks to strike a balance between accommodating growth and change while protecting positive characteristics of the existing Downtown environment. Goals and policies also emphasize increasing the supply of housing Downtown to achieve

an adequate balance between employment and housing and to ensure a supply of housing that is affordable to households from a wide range of income groups

Downtown zones permit the most intensive combination of office, retail, hotel and residential uses within the city, and the allowed heights and densities of some Downtown zones are the highest in the region. The policies recognize that service employment in Downtown offices is the economic sector expected to absorb the greatest share of the city's future employment. With Downtown already established as the regional center for such jobs, the policies allow for further expansion of that role.

The policies promote a development pattern that includes a densely concentrated office core already dominated by high-density office development and served by high-capacity transit, including the transit tunnel. Adjacent to the office core to the north is the retail core, where maintaining existing conditions is emphasized to support the retail function and special character of the area. Wrapping around the retail core to the east and north is an area allowing for expansion of the office core to accommodate future employment growth while providing a transition in development intensity between the Downtown core and adjacent neighborhoods. Around the northern and western perimeter of these core zones are areas intended to accommodate a mix of employment and housing at a scale and intensity of development that is compatible with existing conditions in these areas and adjacent neighborhoods. The northwestern corner of Downtown, Belltown, is primarily intended to accommodate high-density residential development. For the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District neighborhoods at the southern end of Downtown, the policies promote the preservation of the special character of these areas while accommodating compatible levels of employment and housing growth.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

**Alternative 1.** This alternative's height and density increases in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones are consistent with Downtown Urban Center policies promoting concentrated employment growth in designated office core areas with superior access to transit. Height and density increases in DMC zones would allow greater intensities of commercial development—equivalent to what currently is allowed in DOC 2—which permits higher employment densities in some areas with more limited transit service and alters the existing balance between densities permitted for housing and commercial development in areas where policies seek to accommodate both uses. Increasing the permitted height and density of development also alters the transitional function of the zone by allowing a greater scale and intensity of development adjacent to less intensive areas.

The expected increase in the use of bonus and TDR programs as a result of increased commercial densities is consistent with policies for promoting increased housing production in general and, in particular, providing more affordable housing. However, discontinuing the TDC program in the Denny Triangle would remove one incentive for increasing residential densities and funding public amenities in this area.

**Alternative 2.** Alternative 2 allows increased height and density for commercial development in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones consistent with Downtown Urban Center policies promoting concentrated employment growth in designated office core areas with superior access to transit. Retaining current height and density limits in the DMC zone would also retain the transitional relationship that exists between this zone and adjacent areas, as well as the current balance between densities permitted for commercial and residential uses.

Through the use of commercial development incentives, Alternative 2 would generate resources for affordable housing in amounts similar to Alternative 1. While the TDC program would be retained, it could only be used in a substantially diminished portion of the Denny Triangle.

**Alternative 3.** Alternative 3 allows increased height and density for commercial development in DOC 1 and portions of DOC 2 zones consistent with Downtown Urban Center policies that promote concentrated employment growth in designated office core areas with superior access to transit. Current height and density limits would be retained in other portions of the DOC 2 300' zone in the north office core, which would maintain the transition in scale and development intensity that this zone currently provides with adjacent areas.

Rezoning some DMC areas to DMR/C to increase opportunities for residential development would promote housing more strongly in areas intended for mixed use and somewhat higher commercial densities under current policies. Portions of these residential areas would also directly abut DOC 2 zones without the benefit of transition that the DMC zone typically provides between the office core and residential areas. By retaining existing height limits, the same scale relationship would be maintained between the newly created DMR/C zones and adjacent areas. However, additional bulk controls that apply in the DMR/C zone would result in less bulky and consequently less dense developments than possible under existing conditions. For those DMC areas not rezoned to DMR/C, existing height and density limits would be retained, which would maintain the current transitional relationship with adjacent areas. However, special provisions would require new commercial development built to the maximum density limit to provide housing on-site, which would promote residential development more strongly than under existing conditions.

Alternative 3 would provide increased resources for affordable housing through the use of commercial development incentives, but not to as great a degree as Alternatives 1 and 2. However, Alternative 3 would retain a greater area within the Denny Triangle where the TDC program would continue to apply.

**Alternative 4.** Alternative 4 reflects current policies.

## **OTHER DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS AND POLICIES**

In addition to the Downtown Urban Center itself, the Neighborhood Planning Element of the Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies adopted for the five neighborhoods that collectively comprise the Downtown Urban Center, including: 1) Commercial Core Neighborhood, 2) Denny Triangle Neighborhood, 3) Belltown, 4) Pioneer Square, and 5) Chinatown/International District. Policies for neighborhoods within the study area are described below:

### **Commercial Core Goals and Policies**

Commercial Core goals and policies call for maintaining the area as a major employment center, tourist and convention attraction, shopping magnet, residential neighborhood and regional hub of cultural and entertainment activities. Policies also emphasize: improved mobility and convenient transit access; an enhanced pedestrian environment; housing affordable to a wide range of income levels; a unified urban design strategy that enhances connections and integrates public open spaces and green streets into a comprehensive network; and increased use of bonuses and incentive programs to stimulate development and support neighborhood goals.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

**Alternative 1.** Alternative 1 includes height and density increases in DOC 1, DOC 2 and DMC 240' zones that were originally proposed in the Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan as a "super bonus" for use on an interim basis to stimulate development and generate resources for affordable housing and other neighborhood improvements. The permanent height increases proposed in the Plan have already been

implemented. Increasing height and density limits to further stimulate development and increase the use of bonuses and TDR incentives would be consistent with the goals and policies of the Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan. Alternative 1 also includes an option to consider height and density increases in other DMC zones within the Commercial Core, including the DMC 160' zone adjacent to the harborfront and the DMC 125' zone adjacent to the Pike Place Market. These increases were not part of the original Commercial Core Plan.

**Alternative 2.** Alternative 2 includes the same proposals as Alternative 1 for height and density increases in the DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones of the Commercial Core. Since there would be no changes to height and density limits in DMC zones under this alternative, it would be consistent with the Plan's treatment of the DMC 125' and DMC 160' zones. However, it does not include the Commercial Core's "super bonus" proposal for increasing height and density in the DMC 240' zone. Unlike Alternative 1, under Alternative 2, developers would need to use housing bonuses and/or TDR for increases in commercial density above the base FAR.

**Alternative 3.** Like Alternative 2, this alternative would not include changes to height and density limits in Commercial Core DMC zones. However, to increase opportunities for housing, projects built to maximum commercial densities would be required to include residential units, which is not an approach advocated in the Commercial Core Plan. Housing bonuses and/or TDR would also have to be used in DMC zones for increases in commercial density above the base FAR.

**Alternative 4.** Alternative 4 reflects existing conditions, which already include provisions for height increases in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones as proposed in the Commercial Core Neighborhood Plan.

### **Denny Triangle Goals and Policies**

The goals and policies for the Denny Triangle focus on housing, land use, urban form and transportation. Housing policies promote a diverse residential neighborhood with housing evenly distributed among income levels. The use of zoning, development incentives and City investment is encouraged to promote housing development throughout the neighborhood. Land use policies encourage a mixed-use neighborhood and call for stimulating residential and commercial development through a variety of measures, including increases to height and density limits, development incentives, design review and floor area exemptions. Urban form policies emphasize creating a diverse mixed-use character for the neighborhood and promote a variety of neighborhood improvements, including the creation of new open spaces to meet neighborhood open space goals and implementation of Green Street improvements. Transportation policies call for improving local circulation and transit service, reducing external transportation impacts, and providing safer conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

**Alternative 1.** Alternative 1 includes Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan proposals for height and density increases in all zones to achieve objectives for stimulating development and increasing resources for affordable housing and neighborhood improvements.

**Alternative 2.** Alternative 2 includes height and density increases in the Denny Triangle DOC 2 zone, similar to those in the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan. However, no changes are proposed to the limits in the DMC zones. The existing transfer of development credits (TDC) program would continue to allow more modest height increases in DMC zones as an incentive for residential and mixed-use development, which is consistent with policies advocating use of zoning and incentives to promote housing, encouraging a mixed-use neighborhood, and increasing resources for neighborhood improvements.

**Alternative 3.** In Alternative 3, height and density increases would be limited to a portion of the DOC 2 zone in the Denny Triangle. Changes to DMC zones would include reclassifying some DMC areas to DMR, a residential zone, to increase opportunities for housing in areas where the Denny Triangle Plan seeks to promote residential enclaves. In remaining DMC areas, commercial development would be required to provide housing to build to the current maximum density limit allowed.

Proposals that reduce or maintain current development capacity, or directly favor residential over non-residential use, are contrary to the specific actions sought to implement the Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan. However, policies in the Plan do promote more residential development and a stronger residential character in parts of the Denny Triangle. The rezone actions would likely reduce the use of incentives by commercial development to generate funds for affordable housing and would limit capacity for commercial development. Retaining the TDC program in DMC and part of the DOC 2 zones would continue to provide an incentive for residential and mixed-use development that also generates resources for the type of neighborhood improvements the Plan's policies support.

**Alternative 4.** Alternative 4 reflects existing conditions. Some existing provisions were recently implemented and are consistent with Denny Triangle Neighborhood Plan goals and policies, including actions to rezone some DMC areas to DOC 2, changes to the bonus/TDR program to increase funds for affordable housing, provisions for height increases in DOC 2 zones, and height incentives through the TDC program to provide incentives for residential and mixed-use development and increase resources for neighborhood improvements.

### **Belltown Goals and Policies**

The Belltown goals and policies focus on the following areas: 1) housing, 2) land use, 3) transportation, 4) community enrichment and social services, and 5) public safety and neighborly regulations.

Housing goals and policies seek to: promote a varied housing stock affordable to households from a wide range of income levels; prevent displacement of low and low-moderate income residents; preserve existing neighborhood scale and character by retaining existing buildings and encouraging small-scale development; increase use and effectiveness of incentives like TDR and bonuses for preserving and producing affordable housing; and preserve the existing housing stock.

This plan's land use policies emphasize the residential and mixed-use character desired for Belltown, and promote active streetscapes and opportunities for small businesses. Transportation policies promote improved circulation compatible with the area's residential character, efficient transit, adequate parking, and an enhanced pedestrian environment and Green Street improvements.

### **Relationship of the Alternatives**

**Alternative 1.** Included as an option under Alternative 1 is an Advisory Committee recommendation to consider height and density increases in all DMC areas, including the southern and eastern edges of Belltown. Increases to height and density limits would also apply to the small portion of the DOC 2 300' zone that extends into Belltown. The Belltown Plan did not provide direction for any such increases. However, actions for increasing the use of development incentives to encourage the preservation of existing housing and promote the production of new affordable housing are consistent with the Plan's goals and policies.

**Alternative 2.** Alternative 2 does not propose changes to height and density limits in DMC zones, but does include the same height and density increase as in Alternative 1 for the portion of the DOC 2 300' zone that extends into Belltown. In the DMC zone, use of housing bonuses or TDR would be required to



reach the maximum commercial density limit. This is a change from existing conditions, where developers can use housing bonuses, but also have the option to use other non-housing TDR or on-site amenity bonuses to reach maximum limits. Increasing the use of development incentives to encourage the preservation of existing housing and promote the production of new affordable housing is consistent with the Plan's goals and policies.

**Alternative 3.** Alternative 3 proposes changes to the DMC zones in Belltown that would reclassify some DMC areas to DMR, a residential zone that applies to the rest of Belltown, to increase opportunities for residential development and to provide additional limits on permitted development bulk. In the remaining DMC areas, commercial development would be required to provide housing to build to the maximum density limit allowed. Although there is no specific direction for rezones in the Plan, these changes are consistent with policies to encourage more residential development and promote a stronger residential character for the area. However, opportunities for using incentives by commercial development to generate funds for affordable housing may be more limited. Under Alternative 3, no changes are proposed to the portion of the DOC 2 300' zone that lies within the Belltown neighborhood.

**Alternative 4.** Alternative 4 reflects existing conditions.